

WAYS TO RUN

A film by Aboozar Amini

ATTEMPTS TO RUN AWAY FROM A DOOMED FATE VAPORIZE
UNDER THE BRIGHT AFGHAN SUN.

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cinéfondation
LA RÉSIDENCE

Aboozar Amini

E-mail: aminifilm@hotmail.com

Festival de Cannes

5, rue Charlot, F-75003 Paris
Tel. 33 (0) 1 53 59 61 20
Fax 33 (0) 1 53 59 61 24
E-mail:
residence@festival-cannes.fr
www.festival-cannes.org

Since 2000, the Festival Residence has provided each year accommodation and support to twelve selected young directors in order to help them prepare their first or second feature film. A jury presided by a film director sits twice a year, selecting these young filmmakers on the basis of their short films, or

even first feature film, and the merits of their feature film project. During their 4-and-a-half-month stay in Paris, they work on the writing of their feature film project, have meetings with professionals and try, with the support of the Cannes Film Festival, to bring their project to co-production status.



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Technical Information

Working Title: Ways to Run

Director: Aboozar Amini

Screenplay: Aboozar Amini

Nationality: Dutch / Afghan

Genre: Drama, Road Movie

Length: 90 min

Shooting location: Kabul, Afghanistan

Producers:

Jia Zhao (Silk Road Film Salon, The Netherlands)

Email: jia@silkroadfilmsalon.com

Joost de Vries (An Original Film, The Netherlands)

Email: joost@anoriginalpicture.com

Co-producers:

Aboozar Amini (KinoKabul, Afghanistan)

Eva Blondiau (Color of May, Germany)

Dominique Welinski (DW, France)

Director's Information

Aboozar Amini (1985, Bamiyan, Afghanistan) moved to the Netherlands at a young age. He completed his MA at London Film School with **Angelus Novus** (2015) which premiered at IFFR, and won various awards worldwide. **Where is Kurdistan?** (2016) was commissioned by IFFR2016. He had his BA at Rietveld Art Academy in Amsterdam. His graduation film **KabulTehranKabul** (2010) won Wildcard award of Dutch Film Fund.

His latest short film, **Best Day Ever**, premiered at La Quinzaine des Réalistes at Cannes 2018. His first long length documentary **Kabul, City in the Wind**, was the opening film at IDFA 2018 and won the Special Jury Award of International First Appearance Competition and main award at CPH:DOX in Next:Wave competition. Aboozar lives and works in Kabul and Amsterdam and he strives to establish new-wave Afghan cinema together with young local filmmakers through filmmaking.



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Synopsis

Years of war have rendered Kabul a war-torn, chaotic city. Kabul and Kabulis oscillate between good and evil, leaving and staying, life and death, optimism and despair. In the midst of this madness, Abas (45), a scrupulous bus driver, a notorious hashish smoker and a gambler, wants to maintain law and order in the only place under his jurisdiction: his bus. He does this with the help of his apprentice, Afshin (16), who cleans the bus, calls for passengers, collects fare, and chases

Statement of Intent

When I was shooting my documentary film *Kabul, City in the Wind* (2018), I encountered many magical moments. I got acquainted with many bus drivers in Kabul, I commuted on their busses and I found them genuine, hardworking individuals; some are earnest gamblers; and most find solace in smoking hashish. But in the core of it, like all of us, they are humans with human flaws, beauty, worries and joys. The protagonist Abas is one of them, an easy going man with many untold stories who knows Kabul like the back of his hand. These characteristics open up a creative door for me to express what many men and women from Kabul are going through.

While observing the people in Kabul and life in general, I got the feeling that the inhabitants of Kabul were wanderers, as though they were not there to live, but merely passing through. For instance, Abas moves houses at least twice a year. He moves out of the old place and rents a new one. It's the act of choosing between two things that are not necessarily better than one another; the constant struggle between the arduous act of staying and going, between the past and the future; between going from good to bad, or vice versa; going from living under one regime to the next; going from living to death and from

pickpockets and fare evaders. Abas calls him *The Lion of Kabul*. Abas and Afshin's clientele represents the diverse social tapestry of Kabul: jubilant families going to weddings, solemn soldiers riding to the graveyard to pay their respect to fallen colleagues, drug addicts being taken to rehabilitation camps, and students commuting to school. After a series of events, while Afshin joins a gang of pickpockets, Abas gambles his bus and loses it.

being dead to living. This being in between of things, this transition, has been the inspiration behind writing this screenplay. Perhaps what keeps the soul of Kabul alive as a city is this restlessness, this having to constantly change, this having to be somewhere else.

While brainstorming about *Ways to Run*, I came to understand that the documentary genre enabled me to see Kabul and its emotions uninterrupted, but that fiction will allow me to weave in stories and life experiences that are out of reach using a strict documentary narrative.

Ways to Run will be offset against current events – after seventeen years of military combat, the international stakeholders are now entering into peace talks with the Taliban. The upcoming presidential election in July therefore will be crucial. Like the characters of the movie, the political atmosphere of the country too, is uncertain and in transition. But despite all this, life goes on and people like Abas struggle to make a living.

Synopsis

Des années de guerre ont fait de Kaboul une ville déchirée et chaotique. Kaboul et les Kaboulis oscillent entre le bien et le mal, partir et rester, la vie et la mort, l'optimisme et le désespoir. Au milieu de cette folie, Abas (45 ans), chauffeur de bus scrupuleux, célèbre fumeur de haschisch et joueur, veut maintenir la loi et l'ordre dans le seul endroit sous sa juridiction : son bus,avec l'aide de son apprenti, Afshin (16 ans) qui nettoie le bus, appelle les passagers, recueille l'argent du transport, poursuit les pickpockets et les

Note d'intention

Lors du tournage de mon documentaire *Kaboul, City in the Wind* (2018), j'ai vécu plusieurs moments magiques. J'ai rencontré de nombreux chauffeurs de bus à Kaboul. J'ai voyagé dans leurs bus et je les ai trouvés authentiques et travailleurs, certains sont des joueurs sérieux; et la plupart trouvent du réconfort en fumant du haschisch. Mais au fond, comme nous tous, ce sont des humains avec leurs imperfections, leurs séductions, leurs inquiétudes et leurs joies. Le protagoniste Abas est l'un d'entre eux, un homme facile à vivre qui a beaucoup d'histoires jamais racontées, qui connaît Kaboul comme sa poche. Ces caractéristiques m'ouvrent une porte créative pour exprimer ce que vivent beaucoup d'hommes et de femmes de Kaboul.

En observant les habitants de Kaboul et la vie en général, j'ai eu le sentiment que les habitants de Kaboul étaient des vagabonds, comme s'ils n'étaient pas là pour vivre, mais simplement de passage. Par exemple, Abas déménage au moins deux fois par an. Il quitte son ancien logement et en loue un nouveau. C'est le fait de choisir entre deux choses qui ne sont pas nécessairement meilleures l'une que l'autre; la lutte constante entre rester ou partir, entre le passé et le futur; entre aller du

resquilleurs. Abas l'appelle *Le lion de Kaboul*. La clientèle d'Abas et d'Afshin représente un tableau de la diversité sociale de Kaboul : familles joyeuses se rendant à des mariages, soldats sérieux en route vers le cimetière pour rendre hommage aux collègues décédés, toxicomanes emmenés dans des camps de réinsertion et étudiants dans leur trajet régulier pour l'école. Après une série d'événements, tandis qu'Afshin rejoint un gang de pickpockets, Abas mise son bus et le perd.

bon au mauvais, ou vice-versa; entre vivre sous un régime puis sous un autre; entre passer de la vie à la mort et de la mort à la vie. C'est cette façon d'être entre les choses, cette transition, qui a été l'inspiration pour l'écriture de ce scénario. Peut-être que ce qui maintient l'âme de Kaboul vivante, c'est cette agitation, cette nécessité de changer constamment, d'être ailleurs.

Pendant que je réfléchissais à *Ways To Run*, je me suis rendu compte que le genre documentaire me permettait de voir Kaboul et ses émotions sans interruption, mais que la fiction me permettrait de tisser des histoires et des expériences de vie hors de portée en utilisant un récit documentaire strict.

Ways To Run sera contrebalancée par les événements actuels : après dix-sept ans de combat militaire, les parties prenantes internationales entament un dialogue de paix avec les Taliban. La prochaine élection présidentielle en juillet sera donc cruciale. Comme les personnages du film, l'atmosphère politique du pays est incertaine et en transition. Malgré tout, la vie continue et des gens comme Abas luttent pour gagner leur vie.